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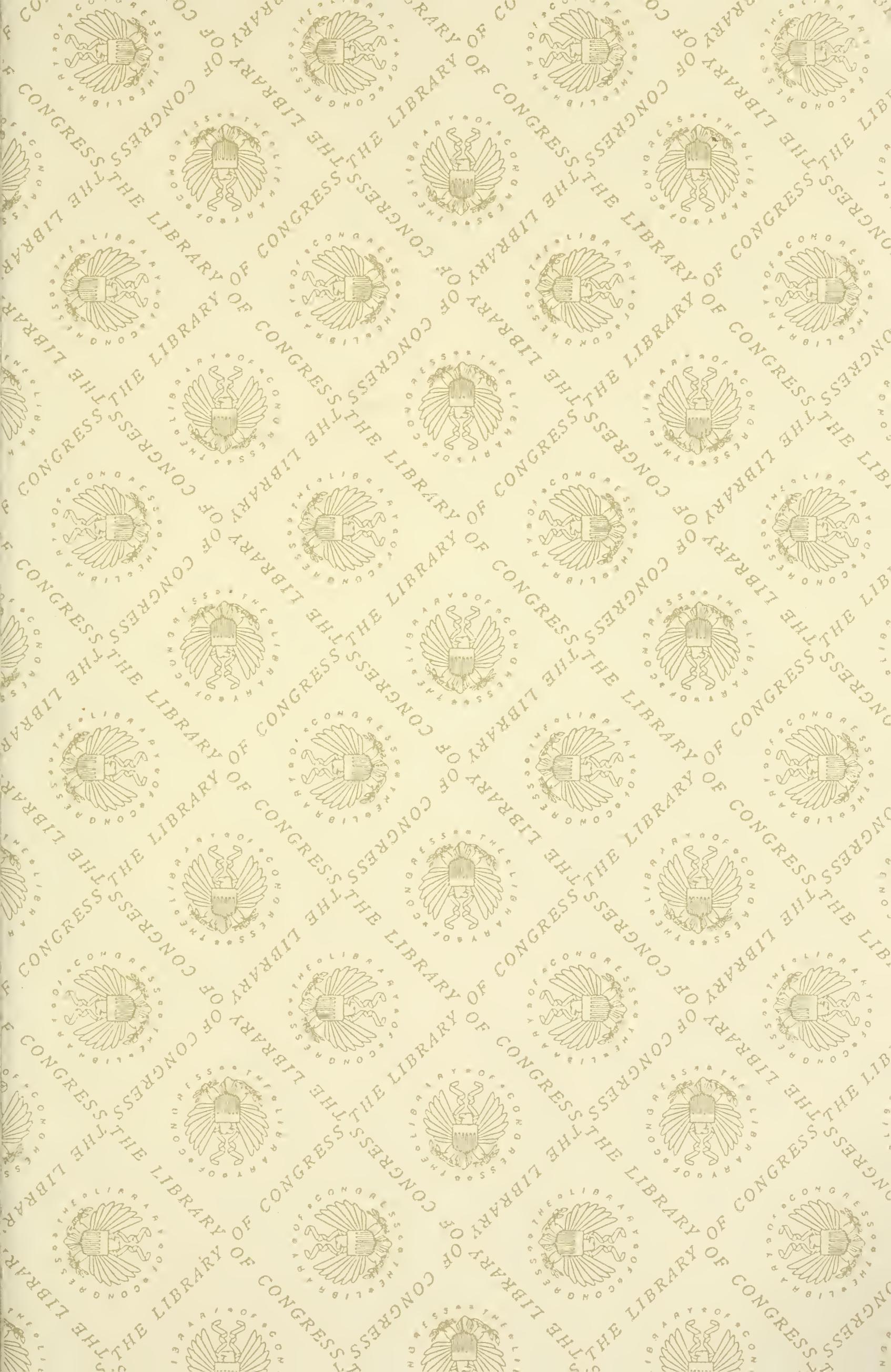
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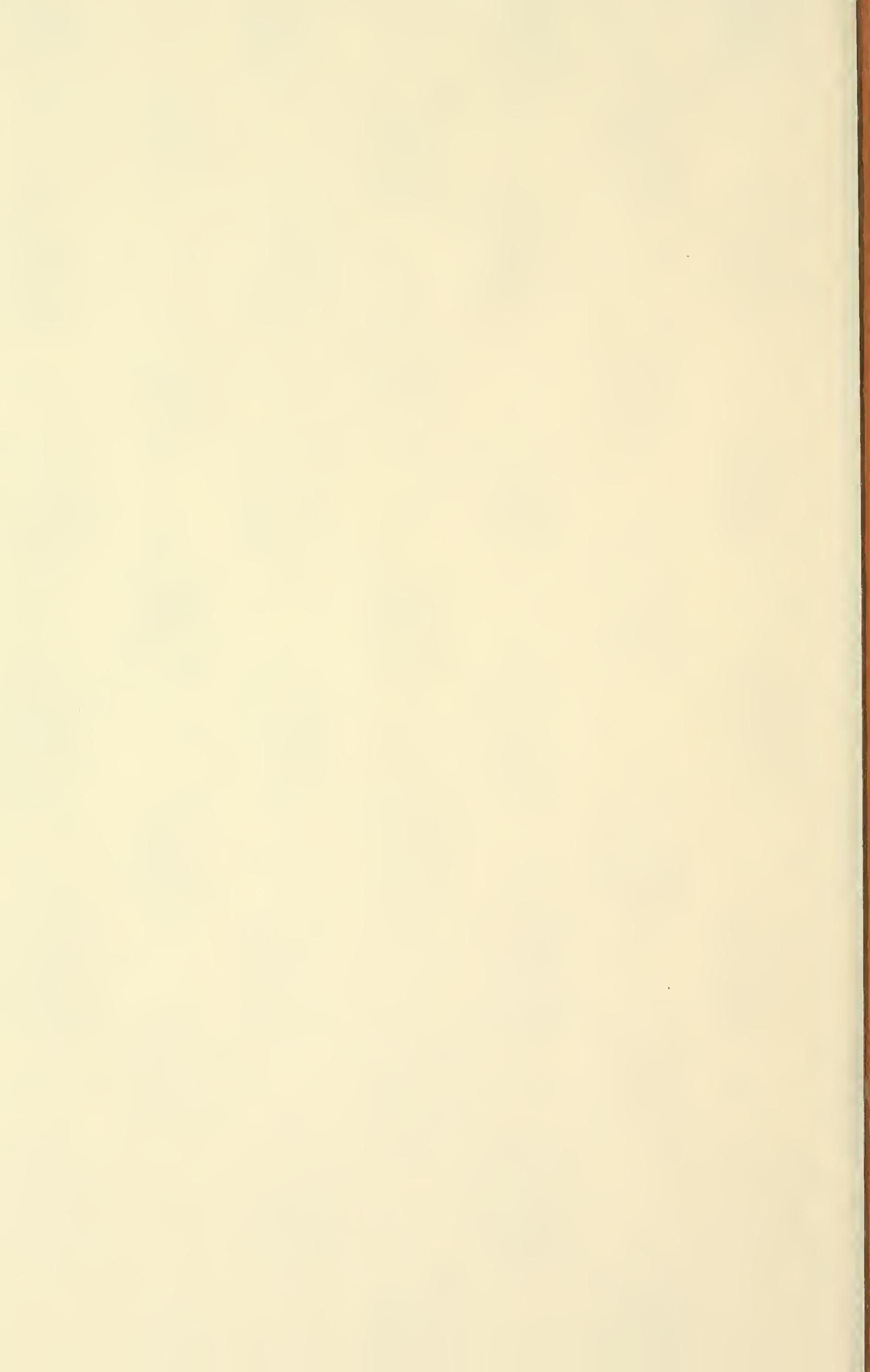


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HALFWAY BROOK IN HISTORY

By

JAMES AUSTIN HOLDEN, A. B.

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON MARKING HISTORICAL SPOTS.

To the Members of the New York State Historical Association:

At a meeting of the Committee on Marking Historical Spots, held September 9th, 1904, Dr. Williams was made Chairman and Mr. Holden Secretary of the Committee. After discussion of the matter, it was voted to mark during 1905, or as soon as possible thereafter, the following spots of the greatest historical interest, viz., "Half-Way Brook, including Fort Amherst," "Bloody Pond," "the Burgoyne Headquarters at Sandy Hill," and the "Old Fort at Fort Edward." Judge Ingalsbe was made a committee on the old "Burgoyne House," Mr. Wing a committee on old "Fort Edward," and the matter of providing suitable inscriptions for "Half-Way Brook" and "Bloody Pond" was left to Dr. Williams and Mr. Holden with power.

A site for the marker at Half-Way Brook having been decided on at the intersection of Glen Street and Glenwood Avenue, on the road to Lake George, a glacial boulder as a base for the tablet was placed in position there through the kindness and generosity of Henry Crandall, Glens Falls. A legal title to the spot was obtained, and the tablet ordered from W. J. Scales, Glens Falls. In October, 1905, the tablet was erected. It consists of a dull, natural finish plate of bronze, and bears the following inscription:

HALF-WAY BROOK.

So called because midway between Forts Edward and William Henry. From 1755 to 1780 it was the scene of many bloody skirmishes, surprises and ambuses. Here the French and Indians inflicted two horrible massacres upon the English and Colonials. One in the summer of 1756 and the other in July, 1758.

FORT AMHERST.

A noted military post, was midway between this marker and the brickyard. Its site was known locally as "The Garrison Grounds." The location was used as a fortified camp in 1757-58. The fort was erected in 1759. It was occupied by the forces of Baron Riedesel in the Burgoyne Campaign of 1777. It was burned in 1780 in the Carleton Raid at the time of the "Northern Invasion."

THE SEVEN MILE POST.

Was a block house with a stockaded enclosure which occupied the rise of ground north of the brook and west of the road, near the residence of W. H. Parker, from 1755 to Revolutionary times. During that period it was one of the most important halting places in north America.

—Erected 1905 By—

NEW YORK STATE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION.

In this connection it is only proper to add to this report that a tablet for Bloody Pond is under way and will be erected during the coming year. The expense of providing for these tablets was taken care of by the following subscriptions:

The Contributors to the Fund for Marking Historic Spots:

Henry Crandall,	F. B. Richards,
William McEchron,	B. B. Fowler,
Jonathan Coolidge,	M. Ames,
R. A. Little,	W. M. Haskell,
J. L. Cunningham,	S. B. Goodman,
E. W. West,	A. W. Sherman,
Win. H. Robbins,	George F. Bayle,
Sherman Williams,	S. T. Birdsall,
Samuel Pruyn,	W. K. Bixby.
J. A. Holden,	

At the annual meeting of this Association, held in August, 1905, J. A. Holden was selected to prepare a historical sketch concerning Half-Way Brook, which is herewith appended.

For the Committee,

SHERMAN WILLIAMS, *Chairman.*

J. A. HOLDEN, *Secretary.*

THE HALF-WAY BROOK IN HISTORY.

By JAMES AUSTIN HOLDEN, A. B.

In choosing as its first subject for a memorial marker "The Half-Way Brook," the New York State Historical Association has made a dignified and wise selection, for it may be truly said that no stream in the Adirondack Wilderness is more noted in history and the Annals of the Border, than this, whose appellation "Half-Way" comes from the fact that it was nearly equidistant from Fort Edward on the south and Fort William Henry on the north. Rising in the branch of the Palmertown range known as the Luerne Mountains, west of Glens Falls, running a crooked but generally easterly and northerly course, now expanding into small lakes or basins, now receiving the waters of numerous small tributaries, ponds and rivulets, it divides the town of Queensbury into two parts, passes the Kingsbury line, turns in a northerly direction, and empties into Wood Creek at a point about three-quarters of a mile south from Battle Hill, at Fort Ann, in Washington County.

In the days before American history began, the region traversed by this stream was a favorite hunting ground for the Red Man, and this water course, even to-day famous for its speckled trout, was one of his chosen pleasureing places.

For more than two hundred years the great deep-worn war-paths or traveling trails of the Indian Nations ran to and from its banks. And whether the fleet, moccasined warriors went westward over the Sacandaga trail to the big bend of the Hudson and so on to the Iroquois strongholds, or whether they came to the "Great Carrying Place," at what is now Fort Edward, through Lake Champlain and Wood Creek, or chose the trip through Lake St. Sacrament past the site of the future Glens Falls, down to Albany, or the west, all must cross this stream, which thus became as familiar to the Adirondack and Iroquois Confederacies, as the

alphabet to us of to-day. This knowledge so gained was made ample use of in later times in many a bloody ambush, surprise or savage foray. After the defeat of Dieskau in 1755, and the building of Fort William Henry at Lake George and Fort Edward at the "Great Carrying Place," the "Half-Way Brook" became a point of strategic importance, and as a halting place and rendezvous for the passing troops, and the convoys of supplies between the two forts, it was noted throughout the northern colonies, as long as the French and Indian war lasted.

It was variously denominated by the military authorities during that time. On an old manuscript map without date in the New York State Library, it is noted as "Schoone Creek," while the Earl of Loudon's map in 1757 has it marked as "Fork's Creek."¹ Rogers, the famous scout and ranger, called it "Bloody Brook." In Col. James Montresor's Journals, in 1757, it is styled "Half-Way Run." On the Robert Harpur map, in the Secretary of State's office at Albany, it is called "Scoune Creek,"² while Knox's Military Journal designated it as "Seven Mile Creek," because it was seven miles from the head of the lake. In Wilson's Orderly Book of Amherst's Expedition, in 1759, it is laid down as "Shone Creek."³

On a "powder horn map" made by one John Taylor of "Swago" in 1765, there is a block house clearly defined at "Helf Br" between Forts Edward and George.⁴ On later maps such as the Sauthier map, published about 1778, and reproduced in the Seventh Volume of the Governor Clinton Papers,⁴ it bears the

¹ The name of "Fork Creek" was probably derived from the name given it by Major General Fitz John Winthrop, who headed an unsuccessful expedition against the Canadians and their Indian allies in the summer of 1690. On August 6th, he states that "he encamped at a branch of Wood Creek, called the fork." This is the place where the "Half-Way" enters Wood Creek near Fort Ann. Here, while his command was in camp, smallpox broke out, and a Lieut. Hubbell died from this disease and was buried at that spot. Our Secretary, R. O. Bascom, in his "Fort Edward Book," p. 15, states "this was the first recorded burial in the country."

² Possibly a corruption of "Skene," from the founder of Skenesborough.

³ The New York World of February 2d, 1896, had a sketch of this powder horn, which, at that time, was in the museum of Major Frank A. Betts, Washington, D. C. This rudely engraved map shows the various forts and settlements along the Mohawk and Hudson valleys, and depicts the trails to Lakes George and Champlain on the one side and to Lake Ontario on the other.

⁴ Letter Hon. Hugh Hastings, State Historian.

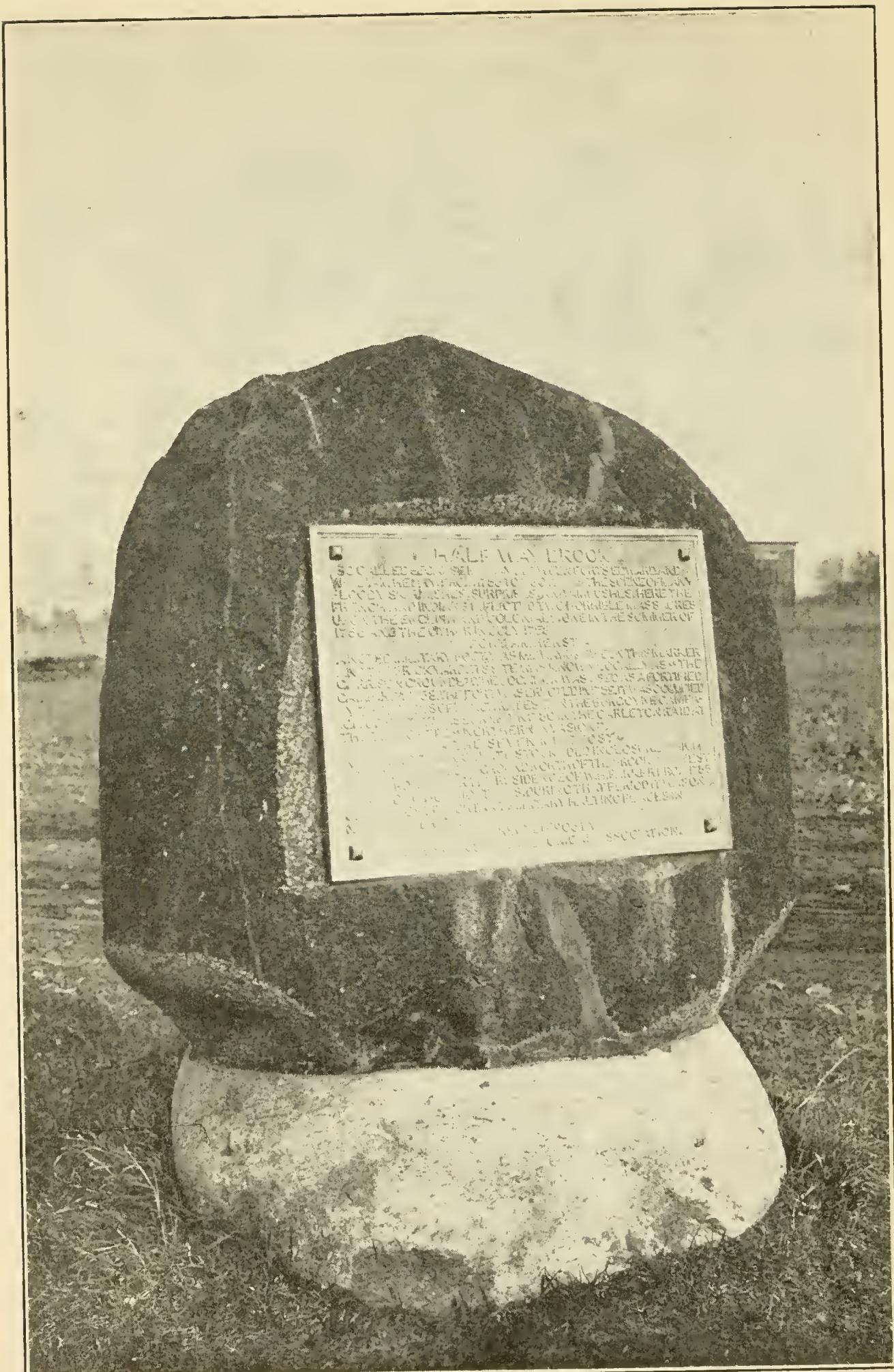
popular name of "Half-Way Brook," bestowed upon it we know not by whom nor when, but which appearing in contemporary diaries, documents, letters and official despatches of "The Seven Years War," has ever since clung to it, and will while its waters run to the sea.⁵

It will be remembered that in the Campaign of 1755, Sir William Johnson had constructed a corduroy road from Fort Edward to Lake George, following substantially the present highway between the two points. Cut through the dark and gloomy virgin forest, with its overhang of interlaced pine and evergreen boughs, its thickets of dense underbrush, the road led through swamps, over rivulets, over sandy knolls, and primal rocky hills to the head of the lake. On every side was leafy covert or rugged eminence, suitable for ambuscade or hiding-place of savage foe, or hardly less savage Canadian or French regular. Every rod of ground on this road is stained with the blood of the English, the Colonists, and their Indian allies, or that of their fierce, implacable enemies. Hardly a mile but what has its story of massacre, surprise, murder, deeds of daring and heroism, or of duty performed under horrible and heartrending circumstances.

In order to protect the road, as well as afford a resting place for soldiers and teamsters, and to supply a needed depot for military stores and provisions, the late Dr. A. W. Holden⁶ in his History of Queensbury, says: "At an early period in the French War, a block house and stockaded enclosure, in which were also several store houses, had been erected at the Half-Way Brook. The date of its construction would seem to have been in 1755, for in that year the French scouts and runners, reported to their chief that the English had erected posts every two leagues from the head of Lake George to Albany. It was situated on the north side of the brook, and to the west of the plank road leading to the head of Lake George. The old military road led across the brook about four rods above the present crossing. A part of the old abut-

⁵ C. Johnson's History of Washington County (pub. Phila., 1878) states that the "Half-Way Brook" was also known as "Clear River"—p. 301. The U. S. Geological Survey, in its map of this section of New York State, published about 1895, has labeled the brook as "Half-Way Creek," which, while it may be technically correct, will never be recognized in local usage or by faithful historians.

⁶ The Historian of the Town of Queensbury, N. Y.



MEMORIAL MARKER AT HALF-WAY BROOK,
QUEENSBURY, N. Y.

ments, timbers and causeway were visible up to the late seventies. It was capable of accommodating upwards of eight hundred men, and was protected by redoubts, rifle pits, earthworks, and a palisade of hewn timbers."

The walls of the fort were pierced for cannon as well as for rifles, or muskets. In passing it may be said that from time to time, this, like all similar frontier forts of the time, was enlarged, strengthened, abandoned, destroyed, rebuilt, as the exigencies of military service made it necessary, but the site remained the same. This was near the rear, and to the westward of the brick residence now occupied by William H. Parker. Continuing Dr. Holden says:

"During the summer of 1756, a force of six hundred Canadians and Indians attacked a baggage and provision train at the Half-Way Brook, while on its way from Fort Edward to the garrison at Fort William Henry.

"The oxen were slaughtered, the convoy mostly killed and scalped, and the wagons plundered of their goods and stores. Heavily laden with booty, the marauding party commenced its retreat towards South Bay on Lake Champlain. Embarking in batteaux they were proceeding leisurely down the lake when they were overtaken by a party of one hundred rangers under the command of Captains Putnam and Rogers. These latter had with them two small pieces of artillery, and two blunderbusses, and at the narrows, about eight miles north of Whitehall, they crossed over from Lake George, and succeeded in sinking several of the enemy's boats, and killing several of the oarsmen. A heavy south wind favored the escape of the remainder."⁷

During this summer several bloody affrays took place between Fort Edward and Lake George, and the French accounts are full of successful raids and surprises.

In 1757 Col. James Montresor⁸ was sent to America as head of the Engineer corps of His Majesty's forces. He drew the plans for and constructed several fortifications in New York Province. In his journal under date of Monday, July 25th, he says: "Set out from Ft. Edward at 6 o'clock in the morning and arrived in the afternoon. Stop't at the Half Way Run, agreed on

⁷ Wm. Cutter's Life of Israel Putnam, p. 60; Dr. Asa Fitch in Trans N. Y. S. Agri. Soc'y, 1848, pp. 916-917; Spark's Am. Biog., Vol. 8, p. 119.

a post there on the south side of the Run on the east of the Road about 50 Yards." Under date of Friday, July 29th, he writes: "Set out for Fort Wm. Henry at 12 o'clock with Gen'l Webb &c, arrived at the Half-Way at 3, met the carpenter going up that I had sent for, to carry on the work there." It does not appear, however, that anything was done with this fortification on account of Montcalm's victory a few weeks later.

The Campaign of 1757 teemed with scenes of bloodshed along the frontier, and the history of the Fort Edward and Lake George trail abounds with sad tales of atrocity and savagery, culminating in the successful attack of Montcalm on Fort William Henry, and followed by the terrible massacre which, whether rightfully or wrongfully, tarnished forever the reputation of that noted and able commander. Of the few who escaped it is on record that Col. (afterwards General) Jacob Bayley of New Hampshire, ran the gauntlet and escaped by fleeing bare-footed for seven miles through the woods to the "Half-Way Brook."

"Six days afterwards," Dr. Holden says, "Captain de Poulharies of the Royal Rousillon regiment, with an escort of two hundred and fifty soldiers, accompanied the survivors of the massacre, upwards of four hundred, with the one piece of cannon, a six pounder, granted by the ninth article of capitulation, as a token of the Marquis de Montcalm's esteem for Lieutenant Colonel Monro and his garrison, on account of their honorable defense, to the post at the Half-Way Brook, where they met a like detachment from the garrison at Fort Edward, sent by General Webb to receive them."

From records kept by officers and other documents, we learn that the "Half-Way"⁸ was usually designated through this war as the meeting place for white flag parties and exchange of prisoners.

After the fall of Fort William Henry, the northern outposts of the British were abandoned, and the frontier left open to the ravages and raids of the savages and the Canadians.

March 10th, 1758, Major Robert Rogers, the Ranger, with

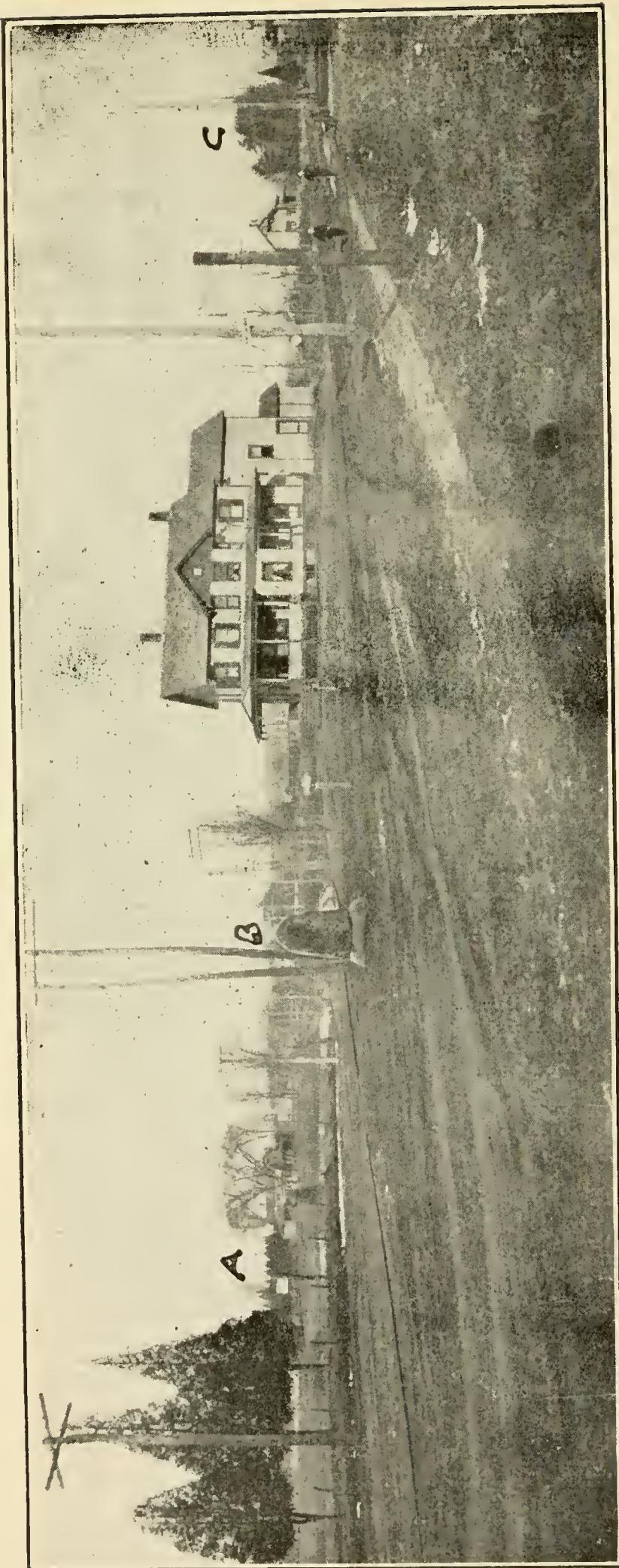
⁸ Col. Montresor, who served in America from 1757 until 1760, makes several allusions to the "Half-Way" in his Journals covering that period.

⁹ This is the generally accepted local usage of the name.

about one hundred and eighty rangers, officers and privates, camped at the "Half-Way," the first considerable body of men to occupy it in the campaign of that year. From here he proceeded down Lake George, meeting with disaster and defeat at the hands of seven hundred of the enemy, three days afterward.

June 8th, 1758, Lord Howe, the pride and idol of the army and his nation, a nobleman by birth and nature, took command of the forces, which for weeks had been gathering at Ford Edward. On June 20th we find him at the "Half-Way Brook" with three thousand men. It is supposed that this body of soldiers camped on what is still known as the "Garrison Grounds," situated on the south bank of the "Half-Way Brook," and about midway between the old Champlin place and DeLong's brickyard. A branch road led from the "Garrison Grounds" to the block house (back of the Parker residence) and crossed the brook a little way below the present highway bridge. This was the spot selected for a "post" by Col. Montresor the year before, and partially laid out at that time. Here for two days Lord Howe remained, until he received reports from Major Rogers and his scouts of the disposition of the enemy's forces. We can imagine him as usual engaged in the rough frontier sports of wrestling, jumping, shooting at a mark, and the like; instructing the regulars in ranger and New World tactics, and proving himself in every way the leading spirit and good genius of the camp. Here no doubt he met Stark, Putnam and other Colonials who later were to be leaders in the war for liberty. On the 22nd this part of the army moved to the lake, and was shortly joined by General Abercrombie and the rest of the troops, making a grand army of fifteen thousand, which was soon to go to disaster and defeat before the rude earth breastworks and felled trees at Ticonderoga. Abercrombie's defeat occurred July 8th, 1758, and he quickly returned to the head of the lake and strongly entrenched his forces for the balance of the season.

A number of diaries and journals of the New Englanders¹⁰ in the Campaign have been preserved and published, and from these, although brief and illiterate in form, we gain an excellent idea of the events of that period. The Colonial soldiery, looked down upon by the British officers, were forced to perform the drudgery and manual labor necessary in building and fortifying the camp,



PANORAMIC VIEW OF HALF-WAY BROOK. A—Site of Old Block House. B—Marker. C—Site of Fort Amherst.

constructing its ditches and breastworks, and throwing up its defenses. Incidentally it may be said, it was the contemptuous treatment accorded the New England troops in this and succeeding campaigns, which made the people of that section so ready to throw off the British yoke later on. When not doing this work they were compelled to act as wagoners, drivers, carpenters, road makers, and the like. These various diaries speak in many places of work of this menial character (for which these men had not enlisted, and apparently did not care for), at and about "Half-Way Brook." General Putnam in his Journal says, "During our stay at the lake, after our return from Ticonderoga, we were employed in almost everything." The Journal of an unknown Provincial Officer (see note), says, under date of July 15th, "Nothing worth notice this day but working and duty came on harder by orders from head-quarters." Both these journals mention a "Sunday off" from work as a great treat and a rarity.

From the 25th of May until the 22nd of October, when the fortifications were dismantled and abandoned by General Abercrombie at the head of the lake, Lieut. Thompson, according to his diary, was on constant duty, either at the "Half-Way Brook" with a picquet guard, or at the lake. The daily life and work of the soldiers is given in his diary in detail. It also gives the names of a number of people who died from disease and were buried at the "Half-Way Brook." He describes the return of the English and Colonials from Ticonderoga, and under date of July 8th, being at the head of the lake that day, there is the following entry in his book:

"Saturday, Post came from the Narrows; and they brought Lord How to ye Fort, who was slain at their landing; and in ye afternoon there came in 100 and odd men, French prisoners into the Fort." These were Langy's men captured at the fatal Trout Brook skirmish.

This testimony by an eye witness would go far to disprove the

¹⁰ Among these may be mentioned the Journals of Rufus Putnam, cousin of Israel Putnam, and afterwards a Revolutionary General; the "Diary of Lieut. Samuel Thompson, of Woburn, Mass." (for which I am indebted to Dr. Sherman Williams, of Glens Falls); the Journal of an Unknown Provincial Officer in Col. Preble's Regiment of Massachusetts; "The Memoirs of John Stark," and "Rogers' Journals."

theory of recent times, that Lord Howe's remains had been discovered at Trout Brook; and it tends to confirm the statements of older historians, that his remains were probably taken to Albany for burial.

On July 20th occurred one of the many skirmishes for which the "Half-Way Brook" is noted. One of the several scouting parties sent out by Montcalm to attack and harass the soldiers and convoys on the "Lidius" (Fort Edward) road and to take scalps and provisions, made one of their usual hawk-like descents, falling upon Col. Nichol's regiment, then quartered at the "Half-Way Brook" block house. Pouchet says, the detachment, five hundred in number, was made up of Canadians and Indians, commanded by M. de Courte-Manche, and that it succeeded in taking twenty-four scalps and making ten prisoners. Only the Indians' impatience prevented a complete massacre of the troops in the block house. Regarding this affray I quote the following in full from the Thompson Diary, as it gives the names of the officers and men killed in this skirmish.

"20—Thursday, in the morning, 10 men in a scout waylaid by the Indians and shot at and larmed the Fort, and a number of our men went out to assist them, and the enemy followed our men down to our Fort, and in their retreat, Capt. Jones and Lieut. Godfrey were killed, and Capt. Lawrence and Capt. Dakin, and Lieut. Curtis and Ensn Davis, and two or three non-commissioned officers and privates, to the number of fourteen men, who were brought into the Fort, all scalped but Ensn Davis, who was killed within 20 or 30 rods from the Fort; and there was one grave dug, and all of them were buried together, the officers by themselves at one end, and the rest at the other end of the grave; and Mr. Morrill made a prayer at the grave, and it was a solemn funeral; and Nath Eaton died in the Fort and was buried; and we kept a very strong guard that night of 100 men. Haggit (and) William Coggin wounded.

A List of Men's Names that were killed in this fight:

Capt. Ebenezer Jones of Washington (of diarist's company).
Capt. (Samuell) Dakin of Sudbury.
Lieut. Samuel Curtice of Ditto (Curtis).
Private (William) Grout of do.
Lieut. Simon Godfrey of Billerica (of diarists Company).

Capt. (Thomas) Lawrence of Groton.
Corp. Gould of Groton Gore.
Private Abel Satle (Sawtell) of Groton.
Private Eleazer Eames of Groton.
Do Stephen Foster Do.
Serg. Oliver Wright, Westford.
Private Simon Wheeler Do.
Ensn. Davis of Methuen.
Sergt. Russell of Concord.
Private Abraham Harden (Harnden?) of Pembroke.
Private Payson, of Rowley.
Private (Jonathan) Patterson, of Sudbury.

We have also an account that there are seven of our men carried into Ticonderoga, which make up the number of those that were missing."

" 21—Friday, in ye afternoon, a party of about 150 went out to find more men that were missing, and we found 4 men who were scalped, and we buried them, and so returned; and at prayer this evening we were laromed by a false outcry. Nicholas Brown died and was burried; and Moses Haggit died."

This account thus corroborates in detail the French official dispatches and Pouchet's description of the attack.

Under date of Friday, July 28th, Lieut. Thompson, who that day had been down towards the Narrows, "to peal bark for to make camp," returned to Lake George and says: "In the evening there came news that the Indians had killed a number of teams and their guard below ye Halfway Brook, and there was a scout fitting to go after them."

As this massacre to which the Thompson Diary so briefly refers, is probably the most important event which took place at the "Half-Way Brook," we quote fully from Holden's History of Queensbury, concerning it:

"On Thursday the twenty-seventh of July, a detachment of four hundred men, consisting of Canadians and Indians, under the command of M. St. de Luc la Corne, a French-Colonial officer, attacked an English force of one hundred and fifty men consisting of teamsters and an escort of soldiers, while on their way from the station at the Half-Way Brook, to the Camp at the head of the lake. The account here given is as nearly as can be remembered in the language of a Mr. Jones of Connecticut, who was a member of Putnam's company which arrived on the ground soon after the affray took place. In the year 1822 he related the circumstances

as here recorded, to the late Herman Peck of Glens Falls, while on a visit to Connecticut. It is from Mr. Peck that I obtained the narrative, which corresponds so completely with the French version of the affair that there can be no question whatever as to its general accuracy and reliability.

“A baggage train of sixty carts, loaded with flour, pork, wine, rum, etc., each cart drawn by two to three yoke of oxen, accompanied by an unusually large escort of troops, was despatched from Fort Edward to the head of Lake George to supply the troops of General Abercrombie, who lay encamped at that point. This party halted for the night at the stockade post at the Half-Way Brook. As they resumed their march in the morning, and before the escort had fairly cleared the picketed enclosure, they were suddenly attacked by a large party of French and Indians which laid concealed in the thick bushes and reeds that bordered the stream, and lined the road on both sides, along the low lands between the block house and the Blind rock.

“The night previously to this ambuscade and slaughter, Putnam’s Company of rangers having been to the lake to secure supplies, encamped at the flats near the southern spur of the French mountain. In the early morning they were aroused from their slumbers by the sound of heavy firing in a southerly direction, and rolling up their blankets they sprang to their arms and hastened rapidly forward to the scene of action, a distance of about four miles. They arrived only in time to find the slaughtered carcasses of some two hundred and fifty oxen, the mangled remains of the soldiers, women and teamsters, and the broken fragments of the two wheeled carts, which constituted in that primitive age the sole mode of inland transportation.

“The provisions and stores had been plundered and destroyed. Among the supplies was a large number of boxes of chocolate which had been broken open and their contents strewed upon the ground, which dissolving in the fervid heat of the summer sun, mingled with the pools and rivulets of blood forming a sickening and revolting spectacle. The convoy had been ambushed and attacked immediately after leaving the protection of the stockade post, and the massacre took place upon the flats, between the Half-

Way Brook, and the Blind rock, or what is more commonly known at the present day as the Miller place.

"Putnam with his command, took the trail of the marauders, which soon became strewed with fragments of plunder dropped by the rapidly retreating savages, who succeeded in making their escape, with but little loss of life. The provincials unable to catch up with the savages, returned immediately to the scene of the butchery, where they found a company from Fort Edward engaged in preparing a trench for the interment of the dead.

"Over one hundred of the soldiers composing the escort were slain, many of whom were recognized as officers, from their uniforms, consisting in part of red velvet breeches. The corpses of twelve females were mingled with the dead bodies of the soldiery. All the teamsters were supposed to have been killed. While the work of burial was going forward the rangers occupied themselves in searching the trails leading through the dense underbrush and tangled briars which covered the swampy plains. Several of the dead were by this means added to the already large number of the slain. On the side of one of these trails, the narrator of these events found the corpse of a woman which had been exposed to the most barbarous indignities and mutilations, and fastened in an upright position to a sapling which had been bent over for the purpose. All of the bodies had been scalped, and most of them mangled in a horrible manner.

"One of the oxen had no other injury, than to have one of its horns cut off. This they were obliged to kill. Another ox had been regularly scalped. This animal was afterwards driven to the lake, where it immediately became an object of sympathy and attention of the whole army. By careful attendance and nursing, the wound healed in the course of the season. In the fall the animal was driven down to the farm of Col. Schuyler, near Albany, and the following year was shipped to England as a curiosity. Far and wide it was known as 'the scalped ox.' The bodies of the dead were buried in a trench near the scene of the massacre, a few rods east of the picketed enclosure.

"The French version of the affair, states the oxen were killed, the carts burned, the property pillaged by the Indians, the barrels of liquor destroyed, one hundred and ten scalps secured, and eighty-

four prisoners taken; of these twelve were women and girls. The escort which was defeated consisted of forty men commanded by a lieutenant who was taken. The remainder of the men who were killed or taken prisoners consisted of wagoners, sutlers, traders, women and children."

The loss of this convoy was keenly felt by the English. General Abercrombie lost some baggage and effects, and, according to the French reports, his music as well. He, as soon as possible, sent Rogers and his body of Rangers across country to try and intercept the marauders before they reached Lake Champlain. Rogers was too late to accomplish his purpose, and on his way back he fell into an ambush near Fort Ann, about a mile from "Clear River" (or the Half-Way), on August 8th, and was badly defeated by M. Marin and his force of three hundred Regulars, Canadians and Indians. In this fight, Israel Putnam was taken prisoner, but was later released from captivity through the intercession of Col. Schuyler.¹¹

This massacre was the cause of a permanent guard of about eight hundred men being stationed at the "Half-Way Brook," which is referred to in the Thompson Diary under date of August 1st, he being one of the eighty out of Col. Nichol's regiment who were ordered on duty at that spot. And from that time until the close of the campaign late in the fall, the road between Lake George and the "Half-Way Brook," and Fort Edward and the same point, was constantly patrolled by detachments from the two forts, practically putting an end to further assaults and surprises.

The diaries of those days show that, as yet, the temperance idea half a century or so afterward to arise in this locality, had no place among the hard drinking, hard swearing, and hard fighting men of that period, as these extracts from the Thompson Journal prove:

"August 28, Monday: Certified that Cape Breton was taken, and 63 cannon shot at Fort Edward and small arms. In joy we made

¹¹ For other and corroboratory original accounts of the attacks of July 20th and 27th see French despatches in Col. Doc. N. Y., Vol. X, pp. 750, 816, 817, 849, 850, and English reports in Watson's Essex, pp. 96, 97; Pouchot's Memoirs, Vol. I, p. 123; Rogers' Journals, p. 117; Putnam's Journals, pp. 72-73; Sewall's Woburn, Mass., pp. 550, 551, 552, 553; Dawson's Hist. Mag., Aug., 1871, pp. 117, 118; Cutter's Putnam, pp. 96, 97; Stark's Memoirs, pp. 26, 436. These accounts differ some in details but are alike in essentials,

a great fire, and every soldier had a jill of Rum at the Half Way Brook; and it was a very rainy night.

“August 29, Tuesday: 140 of us went and made a breastwork; and we had a jill of rum; and we had a remarkable drink of flip this evening; a very cold night.

“Sept. 5, Tuesday: I on guard; and we earned half a jill of rum by making great many bonfires.”

This diary tells of one more attack, which seems to have escaped the notice of other historians, and is therefore inserted at this point. Under date of Sept. 9th, it says:

“Saturday: the picquet guard went to meet the teams; a Sergeant and four men went forward to tell Half Way Brook guard that the picquet was coming; and the Indians shot the Sergeant and scalped him before one man got to him; and then the Indians ran away.”¹²

With the close of the Abercrombie Campaign, and the abandonment of headquarters at Lake George, Fort Edward became once more the northern outpost of Colonial civilization.¹³

In 1759, Sir Geoffrey Amherst was made Commander-in-Chief of the English forces in America. He was a brave, able, but perhaps over-conservative general, since after his easy victory over Montcalm's forces, he occupied himself more in fort building than in active operations of warfare, and in following up advantages gained. During this campaign the “Half-Way Brook” post was first occupied in March, 1759, by Rogers, the Ranger (with his scouting party of three hundred and fifty-eight men, including officers), who was starting out to go down Lake George on the ice on one of his usual disastrous spying expeditions. In the month of May, troops and new levies were beginning to assemble at Albany, under General Amherst's supervision. While they were

¹² In passing we may say that Lieut. Thompson returned home safely, served at Concord and Lexington, and, his biographer says, finally “became one of the most useful men in the Town of Woburn.” To him is attributed the discovery of the “Baldwin Apple,” and a monument commemorating this gift to mankind, has been erected to his memory, making applicable in peculiar fashion Milton's lines, “Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war.”

¹³ General Abercrombie, according to documents in William L. Stone's possession, also spelled his name “Abercromby.” Montresor spells it with a “y,” but leading American historians use the termination “ie.”

being drilled, detachments of the regular forces were being sent forward to Fort Edward. Meanwhile, Colonel James Montresor, Engineer-in-Chief, had been charged with the duty of drawing up plans for fortifications at Lake George, and along the line of march. Accordingly Major West, of his Majesty's troops, with laborers and mechanics, was sent forward to construct an intermediate post between Fort Edward and the lake. A site was chosen near the former "Garrison Grounds," on the south bank of the "Half Way," and a few rods east of the old military road. A stockaded fortress was erected, surrounded on three of its sides by a ditch and counterscarp; while the rear was protected by an impassable swamp (now covered by the Brick Kiln Pond), which at that period existed at that point. This fortification was given the name of Fort Amherst, in honor of the then Commander.

Major West was placed in charge of the small garrison, and the post was equipped with artillery and the necessary supplies and ammunition. A number of huts, barracks and log structures were also built here at this time (whose sites were easily traceable in the early thirties), some of which were in existence at the beginning of the Revolutionary War, and were used by the pioneers of Queensbury, as well as the American forces later on.

Local tradition also has it that the block house on the opposite side of the brook, was then rebuilt, enlarged and strengthened. On some old maps Fort Amherst is laid down as on the site of the old block house, but this is incorrect.

In passing the writer wishes to state that the committee in charge of the erection of the memorial tablets, have chosen to give the block house, back of the Parker residence, the name of "The Seven Mile Post," applied to it in Knox's Military Journal under date of June 28, 1759, and to the fort on the "brickyard road," now called Glenwood Avenue, the name of "Fort Amherst." The remains of the ditches on this road were in evidence up to the early seventies, but in building up and remaking the highway at that point, they were covered over and no vestiges of them now remain.

General Rufus Putnam, at that time orderly sergeant, during the month of June, 1759, describes in his Journal the forwarding of the troops and supplies from Albany, as far as Fort Edward, where he encamped until the 18th, when the regiment with which

he was connected, was marched to the "Half-Way Brook," where they were occupied in making roads and keeping the highway secure for the passage of troops and supplies. Under the dates of July 1st and 4th he writes the following, which is an epitome of the events going on at that time:

"From the time that we came to this place till now, nothing remarkable; but bateaux, cannon and all kinds of stores carrying up, forces marching daily to the Lake and duty exceeding hard."

"The Artillery was carried from Fort Edward to Lake George and was guarded by Col. Willard's Regiment of the Massachusetts. There was carried up 1062 barrels of powder. Col. Montgomery's Regiment marched up as a guard for the Artillery."

Towards the close of June the army, amounting to six thousand men, came up to the "Half-Way," and headed by Rogers' Rangers, marched northward, "formed in two columns," to the head of Lake George, where they pitched their camp, near the ground occupied by Abercrombie the year before. The captures of Forts Ticonderoga and Crown Point, late in July, and the subsequent surrender of Quebec, brought in a great degree, a peace, quiet and safety to the northern frontier to which it had long been a stranger.¹⁴

Some time between 1759 and 1762, at the period following the conquest of Canada, General Amherst granted a permit to one Geoffrey "Cooper," or Cowper, as his name is spelled in Colonel Montresor's Journal, to whom he was a sort of messenger or servant, to occupy the small post at "Half-Way Brook," between Fort Edward and Lake George, for the preservation of the barracks, etc., that had been erected there, and for the convenience of travelers. General Amherst, according to his despatches, deemed it unnecessary after the reduction of Canada, to leave a garrison at that post. This Cowper was probably the first white inhabitant of the town of Queensbury. According to tradition, he was originally a seafaring man. He resided here several years, and, in the town records, his name appears as having been elected to the office of Assessor at the first town meeting held 1766.

¹⁴ According to the Montresor Journals, the "Half-Way Post was occupied by small detachments of guards as late as November, 1759, when the various northern outposts were abandoned as usual, and troops withdrawn for the winter."

Hardly had the sounds of warfare died away, than the pioneer's ax and saw were heard resounding among the yellow pines in this vicinity, as clearings were made and homesteads started.

In September, 1759, James DeLancey, Governor of the Colony of New York, issued a proclamation calling attention to the availability for settlers of "three Several Spotts of cleared Ground, two of them capable of containing half a dozen Families each and the other not less than twelve." These clearings were located on the site of the picket forts at Green's Bridge, where the Imperial Wall Paper Mill now stands, at the "Half-Way Brook," which was the largest one, and near the Half-Way House, French Mountain (site of old Fort Williams).

In response to this invitation to settle in the northern wilderness, on May 20, 1762, the Patent of Queensbury was granted to Daniel Prindle and others, consisting of a township of twenty-three thousand acres of land lying on the Hudson River and taking in the three clearings heretofore mentioned. Part of this property was acquired by certain Quakers or Friends, living at the Oblong, in Dutchess County, New York.

On August 28, 1762, Abraham Wing, the founder of the town of Queensbury, accompanied by a surveyor, Zaccheus Towner, made his first visit to the place which was thereafter to become the scene of his life work. He stopped at the "Half-Way Brook" post with Jeffrey Cowper. At this time "The Town Plot," in the center of which the memorial marker now stands, was surveyed and laid out. This consisted of a plot of forty-four ten acre lots, six lots deep from north to south, and eight lots deep from east to west, forming an oblong square, intersected by central highways and necessary roads. The center lots being reserved for public buildings. Here, the village was to have been located, but it had been ordained otherwise. The settlement was made at "The Falls," and nothing but the name in legal papers now survives to show that this was once intended to be the center of local population.

In 1763 the first attempt was made towards the permanent settlement of the Town of Queensbury; later on the first religious structure in the town, the original Friends' church, was erected of logs on the lot standing on the southwesterly side of the "Half-

Way Brook," on the Bay road, and here, also, was located the first burial place in Queensbury. Here the founders and earliest settlers of the town were laid to rest, their place of sepulture being to-day unmarked and unknown.

During the Revolution the name of the "Half-Way Brook" appears in the lime-light of history but a few times, although the buildings still standing there were doubtless used by the troops passing to and fro between Lake George and Fort Edward, till the time of the Burgoyne Campaign. There, too, was located a ford for watering horses and cattle, which was in use up to the present century.

According to William L. Stone, the well-known historical writer and authority, General Burgoyne detached Baron Riedesel with three battalions to "John's Farm between Forts George and Edward," in order to keep open the roadway between the two places, and also to look after and progress the provisions, stores and supplies from Lake George to Fort Edward, preparatory to Burgoyne's advance south. In Baron Riedesel's Memoirs, he states that "in that place he was completely cut off from the army, so he entrenched himself in a strongly fortified camp so that he might be able to defend himself to the last man."

The place of his encampment has been quite definitely fixed by Dr. Holden, Mr. Stone and the late Judge William Hay, one of the best of authorities on local matters, as having been on the site of the old "Half-Way" block house, heretofore spoken of, on the north of the brook and the fortified camp at the "Garrison Grounds" on the opposite or south side of the stream. Here they remained until the 11th of September, when the camp was broken up and the march southward begun.

After the seizure of Fort Edward by General Stark and his command, a fortified camp commanding the Lake George road was constructed by the Americans in the vicinity of Glens Falls, cutting off the possibility of a retreat by Burgoyne to the northward. William L. Stone, in his "Burgoyne's Campaign," says: "This was located on the site of Fort Amherst." The Marquis de Chastelleux in his travels also speaks of this camp as follows: "On leaving the valley and pursuing the road to Lake George is a tolerable military position which was occupied in the war before

last. It is a sort of an entrenched camp, adapted to abatis, guarding the passage from the woods and commanding the valleys.”¹⁵

Assuming that this was the spot in question, the “Half-Way Brook” post was a factor in bringing on the surrender at Saratoga, for Burgoyne’s Council of War, held Oct. 13, 1777, on being informed “that the enemy was entrenched at the fords of Fort Edward and likewise occupied the strong position on the Pine Plains between Fort George and Fort Edward,” decided a retreat was impossible and an honorable capitulation should be considered.

According to Art. IX of the Saratoga “Convention,” “All Canadians and persons connected with the Canadian Establishment,” “Independent Companies” (which included the Tories) and miscellaneous followers of the army were to be conducted by the shortest route to the first British post on Lake George, under the same conditions of surrender as the regular troops. Pursuant to this agreement, soon after the capitulation on the morning of October 17th, the defeated Royalists, under escort of a guard of American soldiers, were marched to the “Half-Way Brook” on their way to Canada, and from there allowed to pursue their journey to their homes unmolested.¹⁶

During 1780, the old military road was infested with roving bands of Tories and Indians. The last massacre of which history has record occurred in June or July of this year, when a man by the name of Koon, from Kingsbury, and three laborers, on their way to Fort George, were found dead and scalped on the highway near the “Half-Way Brook.”¹⁷

In the fall of 1780, Major Christopher Carleton of the 29th Regiment, with about twelve hundred men, regulars, Tories and Indians, made his historic raid through Kingsbury and Queensbury, capturing Fort Ann on the 10th of October, and Fort George on the following day. At this time, all the buildings and structures in Kingsbury and Queensbury, in the path of the raid, were destroyed by fire by the enemy, causing 1780 to go down in local annals as “the year of the great burning.”

In order to speedily reach Fort George, Major Carleton led

¹⁵ Stone’s Burgoyne, pp. 92, 343, 344.

¹⁶ Public Papers Gov. George Clinton, Vol. IX, pp. 421, 422.

¹⁷ Holden’s Queensbury, p. 477.

his forces from Kingsbury Street directly across country, through the then existing road¹⁹ entering the Lake George highway near the "Half-Way Brook" post. Thus intimately connecting this spot once more with the stirring events of that time.

Holden's History of Queensbury states that Ichabod Merritt, son-in-law of Abraham Wing, the founder, and father of Joseph, the first white child born in this town, erected the first frame house in Queensbury, on one of the sections of the Town Plot, near the "Half-Way Brook," which was burned at this time.

Connected in a way with the history of the "Half-Way Brook," is the battle which took place at Fort Ann July 8, 1777, between the Americans under Colonel Long and the 9th British Regiment of Burgoyne's army. The scene of this affair is located only three-quarters of a mile from the point where the "Half-Way Brook" enters Wood Creek at Fort Ann village, and the semi-successful fight put up by Long's forces, was one of the first serious interferences which Burgoyne received in his plan of campaign.¹⁹

After this period the name of the "Half-Way Brook" practically disappears from the domain of national history and enters the field occupied by the local historian.²⁰ In August, 1783, while

¹⁸ See Gov. Tryon's Map Vol. , Doc. Hist. N. Y., also Holden's Hist. Queensbury, page 479.

¹⁹ One of the Trustees of this Association, E. J. West, informs me that in 1858 William Welles erected a marble monument on the south end of Battle Hill to commemorate this battle. This was destroyed by an act of vandalism about 1870. Lately the Fort Ann "Grange" has set on foot a project to erect another monument in place of the former marker. It would seem to be proper and fitting for this Association to encourage and forward this movement in every possible way.

²⁰ Topographically, the "Half-Way Brook" in any State but New York, with its abundant streams and superior water power, would be entitled to and receive the name of river. Owing to its size and the large territory which it traverses, it was in the early days of the country, of great service commercially in building up this section of the State. Among the more important of the older enterprises on its banks was Forbes and Johnson's Forge in 1811, for making plough-shares, situated on the Forge Pond, an expansion of the "Half-Way," one and a half miles west of Glens Falls; Jeremiah Briggs' Grist and Saw Mills, at what is now the Brickyard, frequented from far and near, in the early part of the century; Champlin's Tannery near the south bank on the Lake George road, and various saw mills, a woolen mill, and other manufactures which were scattered all along the course of the brook and its tributaries, viz., Rocky Brook, the Meadow Run, what was then called "the Outlet" to the "Big Pond" (now Glen Lake), etc. It was of even greater commercial importance in the towns of Kingsbury and Fort Ann, Washington County, than in Warren County. Here, sixty years ago, were located at Patten's Mills, grist and saw mills; at Tripoli, grist and saw

on a journey of inspection of the northern battlefields and fortifications at Saratoga, Fort Edward, Lake George, Ticonderoga and Crown Point,²¹ General Washington, accompanied by Governor Clinton, General Alexander Hamilton, Colonels Humphreys and Fish, halted for rest and refreshment at the "Butler Brook," one of the branches of the "Half-Way," near the entrance to Crandall Park, and were waited on by one Briggs at work in a neighboring field, who brought a cup and pail and supplied water from the brook to satisfy their thirst. Two other future Presidents of our country, Jefferson and Madison, likewise passed through the town in 1791 to visit the many scenes of historic interest at the north.

And so we leave this famous brook, connected with which are the names of many of those brave men who afterward became celebrated in national fields of glory; and bid adieu to the places made noted by the exploits of the two Putnams, Stark, Schuyler, Warner, Stevens, Waterbury, and a host of lesser military Colonial officers, whose experience, beginning on the shores of this inland stream, was to serve their country in good stead in the days which were to save our land from British thralldom. To-day, no longer reddened by the life-blood of English and Colonial or French and

mill, a carding machine and trip hammer for making anchors and sleigh shoes; and at Kanes Falls, near Fort Ann, with a descent of seventy-five feet, saw and grist mills, a machine shop and carding machine. On the Podunk branch of the "Half-Way" was located Anchorville, where there was a saw mill, plaster mill, clover seed mill, some carding machines, a large tannery, three forges and anchor shops. In later times there was situated at Kanes Falls a silex mill, also a woolen mill. The abundant water power at this place has in these latter days, been made use of by the Kanes Falls Pulp Company, for the manufacture of that commodity. At the present time the principal business enterprises on the "Half-Way" in Warren County, are extensive brickyards, about a mile from the site of the old fort, three saw mills and two cider mills. In Washington County at Patten's Mills, there is a grist mill, and at Griswold's Mills, a saw mill and a grist mill. On the "branch" at West Fort Ann, is located a planer and cider mills. Owing to its width and the overflow of its banks in spring and fall, it is necessary that the brook be spanned by substantial bridges. In both Warren and Washington Counties strong iron structures have replaced the old-fashioned wooden bridges, which were so common in road-making but a few years ago. In Washington County, there is a bridge about seventy feet long near Kanes Falls, and at Fort Ann one in the neighborhood of fifty feet long. (Acknowledgments are due to Geo. M. Mead, Glens Falls, for information contained in this note. See Trans. N. Y. S. Agri. Socy. 1849, p. 942, for further facts.)

²¹ W. L. Stone's Reminiscences of Saratoga, p. 14; Irving's Washington, Holly Ed., pp. 17, 18.

Indian, the "Half-Way" runs a clear and peaceful stream through copse and thicket, field and meadow, swamp and swale; turning, as it goes, the wheels of industrial progress in many a village and hamlet, and doing its appointed work in the upbuilding of our national prosperity. At last, merged in the yellow waters of Wood Creek, it flows into the green depths of Lake Champlain, and then into the broad reaches of the St. Lawrence; but before losing its identity in the surging waters of the North Atlantic, it laves the frowning cliffs of Quebec, thus forming a shimmering and living band, which unites for all time the valley of the Holy Lake and the Plains of Abraham; those two eventful spots where the French dominion received its first check and final overthrow, thus placing, in the end, the North American Continent forever under the progressive control of the Anglo-Saxon race.









